

Southern Houston Sector Study

Executive Summary

Overview

- ❖ The Southern Houston Sector covers 117 square miles.
- ❖ Area is bound by Loop 610 on the north, City boundaries on the south and east, and US 90A (South Main) on the west. It includes approximately 117 square miles, of which about 50 square miles are undeveloped. By comparison, the study area is similar in size to Atlanta, while the undeveloped areas are comparable in size to Boston or San Francisco.
- ❖ Population in the Southern Sector grew 27% between 1990 and 2000 compared to a citywide growth of nearly 20%.
- ❖ Area population is predominantly African American (38 percent).
- ❖ Between 1990 and 2000, Hispanic population experienced highest increase in the area (from 20 to 32 percent).
- ❖ The population was 318,300 in 2000.
- ❖ Undeveloped land covers 32 percent.
- ❖ Major freight rail corridor.
- ❖ The area has good highway connections, especially since the completion of the Beltway 8. It is served by freight rail in its eastern, western and central sections. It is also the location of two major airports, Hobby airport and Ellington Field.
- ❖ Major employment centers (Texas Medical Center and the Port of Houston) are immediately adjacent to the study area.

Development Issues

- ❖ ***Accessibility.*** Although the area has excellent freeway and highway connections, many major thoroughfares are discontinuous, resulting in poor **access to specific locations in the study area.**
- ❖ ***Environmental concerns.*** Floodplains, landfills, sand pits and oil fields reduce the development potential of sites in the study area. The presence of undesirable land uses also hurts the demand for development in the area.
- ❖ ***Insufficient and inadequate infrastructure.*** A primary reason why so much land remains undeveloped in the study area is the lack of infrastructure. In addition, some areas that are served have inadequate facilities.

- ❖ ***Lack of community services.*** Because of the low population density of the study area, many neighborhoods lack the community services and amenities to be found in other, denser, parts of Houston.
- ❖ ***Distressed areas.*** Many of the older residential areas and commercial corridors are experiencing deterioration. Without some form of intervention to encourage new private development, deterioration will continue and accelerate.

Growth and Development Potential

- ❖ About 50 square miles of undeveloped land exists in the area.
- ❖ Over 100 undeveloped parcels are over 1,000,000 square feet (23 acres) in area.
- ❖ Accessible by rail, air and major thoroughfares.
- ❖ Adjacent to major activity centers; medical center, Port of Houston, NASA, Reliant Park.

Strategies

- ❖ The City should ***take the lead in developing a unified, long-range vision/plan*** for the area that sets priorities and outlines a set of strategies and actions to achieve the desired vision. Capitalizing on the area's opportunities and assets, the plan would identify opportunities for strategically leveraging public investment that would attract private investment and development.
- ❖ ***Market the plan***, promoting opportunities to potential developers and marshal the support of the local community.
- ❖ Ensure ***continued coordination among investors and stakeholders*** and play a strong role in influencing the pattern of private sector development in the sector by representing the interests and concerns of the major stakeholders.
- ❖ Ensure ***an open dialogue with vested stakeholders*** such as major landowners, investors and developers about the needs and future of this area. In addition, a review of proposed investment by local governmental agencies, such as the Harris County Flood Control District's project on Sims Bayou, TXDOT infrastructure and the City of Houston CIP commitments, is essential to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure that investment is targeted to priority areas identified in the plan.
- ❖ ***Finance needed infrastructure improvements*** to attract new development will require investigating other financing tools such as Special Districts, Enterprise Zones and Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones and developing a set of incentives. Special districts have recently been introduced in the study area to pay for part of the infrastructure costs of new development.

- ❖ Develop an ***Infrastructure Master Plan*** that addresses roads and utility needs and anticipates future development/redevelopment, with a timeline for committing to undertake infrastructure improvements and provide a positive direction to encourage investment in the area attractive to development.
- ❖ ***Coordinate with Metro*** to enhance transit use through public outreach and infrastructure improvements.